

## Northumberland Early Help Strategy summary for Education 2018



### **Forum and vision**

Northumberland is a great place for families to live in and for children to grow up in. We want our children to be healthy, safe and cared for. We want them to have the best start in life, so they are able to make the most of opportunities throughout their childhood and adolescence. We know that the needs of parents and the family environment have a significant impact on the life chances of the child therefore our plans take account of the whole family's needs.

Children, young people and their families who need support will receive the right intervention as early as possible to tackle problems and prevent issues escalating. Services will be delivered using a whole-family approach. Our interventions will be based on 'what works'.

This is a significant challenge for all organisations; however partners, including the Council, the NHS, Education and the Voluntary Sector, have committed to this strategy. It forms the agreement between the organisations that make up the Northumberland Safeguarding Children Board. These agencies have an important role to play in helping all children to thrive supported by universal services such as midwifery, health visiting and schools, as well as providing services to those children and families who need extra help to get back on track.

Organisations working together have made good progress over the lifetime of the last Early Help Strategy in ensuring that arrangements for children and families through early help are coordinated and timely. However, there is still much to do to continue that journey.

We want to intervene in a timely way and our Early Help Strategy sets out our approach to achieve our aims through a systematic, multi-agency, consistent approach to early intervention. It sets out what we will do to make sure that children and young people get the early help they need. It depends on families, communities, staff and volunteers all working together to make the difference. We want to ensure that children in Northumberland have happy, healthy, safe childhoods and grow into adults who can fulfill their potential and contribute to their communities.

## Summary for education

### 1.2 Developments during the last strategy

There have been a number of key developments which have supported early help across Northumberland:

- Early Help Assessment form-the Early Help Assessment form was relaunched in 2014 as a holistic assessment and plan to support children and families who require early help.
  - [The Early Help Assessment is being looked at again over the next 12 months to consider bringing it into the Signs of Safety approach](#)
- Early Help Locality Hubs-first piloted in 2014 there are four early help locality hubs across the county which serve as a multi agency single referral point for families who require early help support.
  - [Schools attendance if a child is being discussed is essential to ensure full picture is understood and to make sure the right outcome is achieved.](#)
- Development of the First Contact service-this acts as a single point of access for children's social care now including the early help coordination staff who manage the locality hub process. This supports greater consistency of decision making and further opportunities for families who don't require statutory social work input to be supported through early help.
  - [Talk to us for advice](#)
- Review and relaunch of the multi agency thresholds document-this has clarified where early help sits on the continuum of need for children and families.
  - [This will continue to be reviewed to ensure it meets the needs of all partners working with children and families](#)

### **Definition of Early Help in the Early Help Strategy**

**Early Help** is about offering help to children and families before any problems are apparent and in providing help when low level problems emerge. It refers to both help in the early years of a child or young person's life (including prenatal interventions) and early in the emergence of a problem at any stage in their lives.

**Early Help** is not about specialist services for children, young people and their families. Specialist services are there to support families who are experiencing significant difficulties e.g. social care services for children who are at risk of harm.

**Early Help** is about stepping in to prevent escalation of children, young people and families needing any sort of specialist service. Early help is about providing low level services at the right time to meet families' needs and to keep them in control of resolving their issues and problems.

**Early Help** is important as it allows for support to be put in place at the right time to meet families' needs prior to issues reaching crisis point and to reinforce families' own skills to determine their life course and therefore reducing poor outcomes and inequalities for children and young people. It also helps to break the cycle of families being dependent on services by empowering and enabling them to do things for themselves making them more resilient and independent.

**Prevention:**

Example: All schools use a graduated approach and quality first teaching to identify additional support for all children. Schools must involve and engage parents in all strategies.

Additional needs don't emerge with support offered in school

**Early Intervention**

Early intervention relies on the early identification of need for a child or young person which includes a timely assessment and action plan being put in place which is reviewed and monitored. This could be a relatively 'light touch' approach involving settings, school and parents at first which supports a family for short period whilst an issue is resolved or could involve more services for a longer period.

Additional needs emerging but identified and managed effectively with partnership working

**Organisational Responsibility for Early Help****Keeping Children Safe in Education 2018****Early help**

27. If early help is appropriate, the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) will generally lead on liaising with other agencies and setting up an inter-agency assessment as appropriate. Staff may be required to support other agencies and professionals in an early help assessment, in some cases acting as the lead practitioner. Any such cases should be kept under constant review and consideration given to a referral to children's social care for assessment for statutory services, if the child's situation does not appear to be improving or is getting worse.
  
71. Schools and colleges should work with social care, the police, health services and other services to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm. This includes providing a coordinated offer of early help when additional needs of children are identified and contributing to inter-agency plans to provide additional support to children subject to child protection plans. All schools and colleges should allow access for children's social care from the host local authority and, where appropriate, from a placing local authority, for that authority to conduct, or to consider whether to conduct, a section 17 or a section 47 assessment.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/741314/Keeping\\_Children\\_Safe\\_in\\_Education\\_3\\_September\\_2018\\_14.09.18.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/741314/Keeping_Children_Safe_in_Education_3_September_2018_14.09.18.pdf)

Early help in Northumberland is a shared organisational responsibility. Support has been provided to and continues to be available for professionals within organisations who complete Early Help Assessments and act as the lead professional. It is incumbent upon all the partner organisations to ensure that appropriate staff feel skilled and able to complete Early Help Assessments and that any barriers are identified and overcome.

- Education staff often undertake the Lead Professional role this role involves gathering the information to complete the EHA and coordinating meetings to agree the plan but not being expected to do all of the work themselves

In addition to this the roll out and embedding of the early help locality hubs has led to their endorsement through the previous Strategy by the LSCB partners. It is the responsibility of the relevant organisations to ensure that staff participate fully in the processes linked to the hubs including attendance at and participation in the meetings involved. Through use of the thresholds document agencies should identify clearly when providing support through an Early Help Assessment should be undertaken by themselves, when a referral to the hubs would be appropriate and when the risk is such that a referral to the children's social work teams should be made. The single point of access arrangements for children's social care, including early help staff, will make this easier for referring staff in the coming years.

Please see link below for the full Early Help Strategy:

[https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Child-Families/Safeguarding/\\_Early-Help-Strategy-2018-21-final-version.pdf](https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Child-Families/Safeguarding/_Early-Help-Strategy-2018-21-final-version.pdf)